

HEART OF THE GOLDEN ROAN.

BY O.C. AURINGER.

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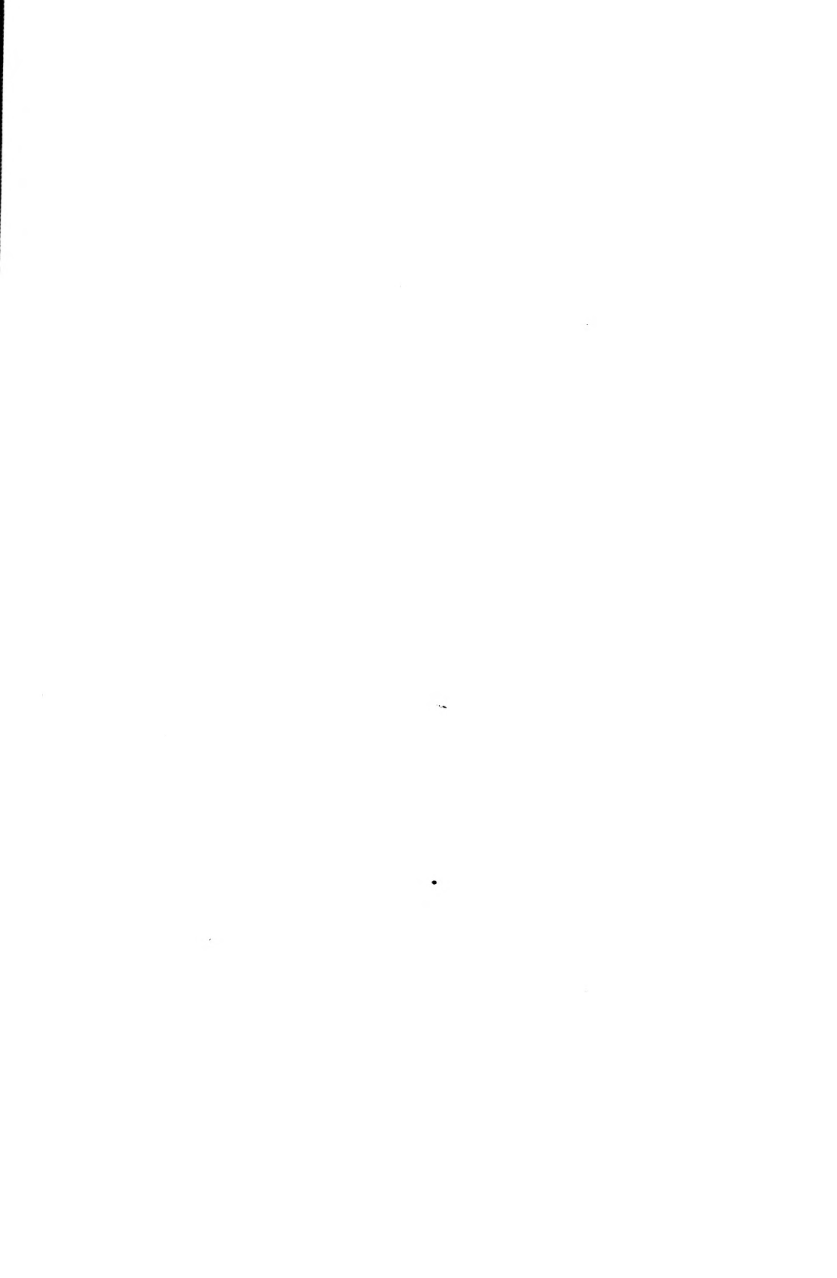
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



THE HEART OF THE GOLDEN ROAN

BY
O. C. AURINGER

Author of
"SCYTHE AND SWORD."

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THE HEART OF THE GOLDEN ROAN



THE HEART OF THE GOLDEN ROAN.

I.

THE LOVE-CALL.

*“Our ship lies in the bay,
She sails at break of day,
I listen with dismay to the sea's lone sighing,
 sighing;
My heart's pride yields to fate,
Come now, my love! my mate!
Oh fly ere 'tis too late, like a dove to its own nest
 flying!”*

This message came to me,
With another, from the sea,
By a courier riding free through inland
 town and village,

Who left them at my gate
As the hour was growing late,
On that royal day of fate in the time of
war's hot tillage.

No leap of joy, no beam
Of lovely fire, no gleam
Of rapture, broke the dream of my heart's
dull-flowing river;
So long had sorrow fed
With bitter wine and bread
The life which once had shed love like
a royal giver.

This, which by every word
Would once my heart have stirred
To singing like a bird by spring's sweet
sounds delighted,

Now left me cold and pale,
Encased in icy mail
Of life's chill frost and hail,— a knight to
sorrow knighted.

I mused . “ Thus love, alas !
Doth fade and fail and pass,
Akin to flowers and grass, which winter's
snows shall cover ;
So soon alike they lie,
Concealed from heart and eye,
And heed no bitter cry from late-repentant
lover.

“ Thy ‘ heart's pride yields to fate,’
Alas ! too late, too late !
What notes can love — or hate — in this
waste soul set ringing ?

A mountain cased in snow
Keeps warm the fires below, —
From a stream's heart frozen thro' issues
no voice of singing.

“ The agony, the strife,
The dull days cursed with life,
The nights with anguish rife, and evil
faces crowded,
'Mid lands in deadly ban,
Where forms of beast and man
Are like grim fiends to scan, in fatal
gloom enshrouded ;

“ The thought, the ceaseless pain,
The fever of the brain,
The tears, the gloom, the strain of bitter,
blind emotion ;

The world an open grave,
Wherein the good and brave
Sink as beneath the wave of an all-devour-
ing ocean ;

“ The shapes that faintly flit
Round altars dimly lit,
In wastes for man unfit, forms hollow and
unreal,
That with grim joy amain
Build on — a dusky fane,
O’er many a brave hope slain, and fault-
less fair ideal —

“ All these are gone, and I
Look round without a sigh
Upon an earth and sky of love’s warm
hues denuded ;

Serene and even flow
My days; nor joy, nor woe,
Disturbs me here below; so live I undet-
luded.

“All cold! — is this a nest
Where love may soothe his breast,
Warmed, fondled and caressed, charming
and charmed forever?
I look, and I but see,
Stretched out all barrenly,
Life, like a frozen sea, with no sweet isle
'soever.

“Thou speak'st of wings — what wings?
Are these poor faded things
Fit for the ether springs and shining tides
of azure?

Poor plumes ! Yet well I know
They once were all aglow
With heaven, and charmed to go like
doves in search of treasure.

“ Ah ! couldst thou once have seen
All that which should have been !
Then had our fields been green, our skies
all bloom and splendor !
As 'tis, I plod my way ;
Thou goest — who can say
Whether through March or May, by rug-
ged paths or tender ?

“ Who seeks the feast too late
Finds closed the palace gate,
And silence like a fate sitting beside as
warder ;

Even could one enter there
Some guest were in his chair,
And naught but crumbs for fare reward
untimely ardor.

* * * * *

“What bird sings in my ear
With notes so low and clear!
What says he? ‘Cheer, cheer, cheer!’—
thy last words as we parted.
So thou hast left thy voice
To creatures that rejoice,
And have no sweeter choice than echo it
glad-hearted.

“I see on every side
Thy image multiplied;
My wild brook wandering wide has kept
thy murmured laughter;

The silent woods that crown
The hills with autumn brown
Keep yet the mystic frown that fell thy
 light moods after.

“ Night’s lustrous curtains wear
The shadow of thy hair ;
The sun and sunlit air repeat thy smiles
 and blushes ;
The deep blue heavens be
Type of thy purity,
Clear, calm, and endlessly stretched
 through mysterious hushes.

“ Thy spirit with high-born mien
Walks through the night, its queen,
Moving with pride serene through high
 and holy places ;

Ah, love ! how may it be
All things do keep for me
These wonders that I see — thy glories
and thy graces ?

“ Oh that I might abide
Forever at thy side,
And feel love’s royal tide through my
breast in strong floods flowing !
Love wonderful ! a fire
Of boundless bliss, desire,
A harp, a lute, a lyre — yea, all things
deep and glowing !

“ Ah love ! my love ! — say, why ! —
What hinders me that I
Take not to wing and fly to thy breast
like a swift dove flying ?

Who mocketh at me now?

Oh, fairy! it is thou!

Love stolen again I trow to his nest long
empty lying!

“Ay, he is there once more,

Fair-eyed as e’er before,

Delightful as of yore, to mock at death
and sorrow;

Now I believe it true

Love dies not, but anew,

Comes like the sun and dew with each
triumphant morrow.

“Sweet welcome! be it so!

And ye, despair and woe,

Sad twins, farewell! we go where our
heart’s desire shall lead us —

All gaily love and I
Together forth will fly,
Nor ask a hope more high, or a swifter
wing to speed us!"

II.

A DREAM INTERLUDE.

I laughed, and idly laid
My length within the shade
An ancient poplar made beside my cot-
tage gable,
And let my vision run
O'er webs by fancy spun,
In isles beneath the sun, and lands em-
balmed in fable.

Methought beneath strange trees,
In a paradise of seas,
A bower of rest and ease beyond the
world's disquiet,

Where musky breezes haunt,
And singing seas enchant,
Whose warmth no winters daunt, or threat
with boisterous riot,

Ensconced with her I lay,
Months, years — and all like May,
Unvexed by waif or stray from life's vain
fret and fever ;
With ministrations sweet,
And toil of happy feet,
Serving as Love deems meet, when naught
doth vex or grieve her.

A lodge built wondrously
Of marble, faced the sea,
Flushed with divinity of Grecian light and
glory.

And looked with sunny smile
On many a golden isle,
And brooding mountain pile, enwreathed
with song and story —

Here dwelt we ; on calm days
We pierced the forest's maze,
To find by o'ergrown ways enchanted
grove and grotto ;
With yearnings half divine
We heard the winds repine
Round many a ruined shrine once 'graved
with glorious motto.

'Mid wilds of rugged hills,
And solitude that fills
The woody intervals 'twixt sea and silent
mountains,

In awe and sacred truth
We nursed our glorious youth
With food of visioned sooth, and drink
from charmed fountains.

On many a peerless eve
We heard the sea-wind weave
Its harmonies that grieve round ruined
wall and column ;
And saw like clots of gold
The marvelous stars unfold
In glorious groups untold, from spaces
hushed and solemn.

Amid night's mystery,
Arisen from the sea,
Hero and deity walked through our silent
dwelling ;

At morn we knew from whence
That atmosphere intense,
That genial influence from all its cham-
bers welling.

This genial vision fled,
Like cloud-forms lightly spread,
And lo! my thought was led to virgin
wildernesses,
Where, in an emerald zone
Of ancient forests, shone
A mystic lake, o'erstrewn with gems and
sunbeam kisses.

By velvet bower and bank,
Made green with showers they drank,
'Mid stately trees in rank, rose life's en-
chanted palace,

Calm as a marble dream,
 Warmed by the yellow gleam
 Of orient light supreme poured from the
 sun's red chalice.

Behind, a mountain proud,
 Beneath its crowning cloud,
 Shot down a torrent loud that fell with
 foam and thundered ;
 Then like an arrow shot
 Through haunted grove and grot,
 And many a flowery spot its cavern cleft
 and sundered.

Some sunlit domes did lift
 Their forms amid the drift
 Of woods which winds did shift and roll
 in murmurous surges ;

Along the mimic sea
Bright sails glanced sunnily,
Then fled like clouds that flee when windy
current urges.

Within the palace door,
Along each chamber floor,
Walked Love, that evermore made blest
the habitation;
And ever round her feet
Rose incense pure and sweet,
Like holy scents secrete in some divine
oblation.

Within its garden close
Grew buds beside the rose,
Shielded from wandering foes by fairy
powers enchanted,

That let no blast or blight
Steal one away by night,
Or let on them alight one shade from
regions haunted.

Here life divine and good
Flowed on, all storms withstood,
In mutual holihood and strength of faith
and feeling; —
The thread so lightly spun
Snapped as I saw the sun,
His journey almost done, in clouds his
face concealing.

Then from my lips the cry
Broke forth reproachfully, —
“O wretched spendthrift! why dream on
in idle vision

While time with jealous feet
Speeds on — ah, ne'er so fleet!
Up! forth! love's face to greet, thou
stock for love's derision!

“Is there yet time? — The place
Lies leagues hence. — 'Twere a race
For very life! A pace like the wild wind's
must speed me!

Ho now, my golden roan!
Thou prince in blood and bone,
Matched in the world by none, — come!
now indeed I need thee!”

III.

THE WAR-CALL.

*“ Our ship waits in the bay,
At dawn we sail away
To the aid of a cause at bay, a land in peril
lying;
Speed hither while you may!
Up! — up! nor stop nor stay! —
Oh haste to the holy fray with wings like an
eagle’s flying! ”*

Keen shoots of feeling came
An instant through my frame,
Like darts of ice and flame alternately
succeeding,

So alien was the thought
This other message brought,
So swift the cross it wrought to a heart on
 love-dreams feeding.

Dropped idly to the sand
The missive from my hand;
My spirit all unmanned broke forth in
 bitter railing —

“Sweet comforter indeed, —
In this my hour of need,
Arrived with such hot speed, and prompti-
 tude unfailing!

“O mortal misery!
What have I done to thee,
Dumb power! to draw on me this deed of
 spite and malice?

Wretch! would no other hour
Of all within thy power
Suffice on me to shower the poison of thy
chalice?

“No, but it must be this —
Here on the eve of bliss
To greet with icy hiss love’s message long
belated!
Oh, it was kind to wait
Till my hand was on the gate,
And the heart in my breast elate with
rapture new created!”

I stilled with strong control
The tumult of my soul,
Subdued the threatening roll of the pas-
sions’ stormy riot;

A conquering impulse proud
Stilled all their mouthings loud,
Till they sank like lions cowed and quelled
to sullen quiet.

I gathered in my hand
The message from the sand,
And read with calm command again the
warlike greeting :
What gulfs do oft divide
Two missives side by side
Borne on o'er distance wide, in the self-
same haven meeting !

And slowly as I read
Through all my frame was shed
A warlike heat, that spread and waxed to
ardent burning ;

And from the heart's profound
Arose an ominous sound,
As of a drowsing hound within his kennel
turning.

Some seed of warlike fire,
Long sown in blood and ire
By some forgotten sire in fields of arms
redoubted,
Warmed by a breath intense
Of kindred influence,
There stirred with wakening sense, and in
the darkness sprouted.

Then through my being rang
War! war! with angry clang,
Till imagination sprang on the bold theme
elated ;

And I saw before my eyes
Heroic visions rise,
Inflamed with ardent dyes, with tragic
pomp inflated.

A ship with ragged sail
Drives on before the gale,
By mists of spray and hail, and gathering
night, beclouded,
Within whose hollow frame
Burns valor's conquering flame, —
Courage no storms can tame, in its dim
chambers crowded.

In ribbèd cabins sit
Grim forms by lanterns lit,
Whose shadows toss and flit o'er heaving
rib and rafter;

And round them heaped and hung,
Arms! arms! whose metal tongue
Rings sharp the echoes flung from warlike
song and laughter.

Swords, pistols, pikes, lie mixed
With bayonets unfixed,
Rifles in sheaves betwixt black cannon
chained and muzzled ;
Warlike accouterment
In dusky spaces pent,
With tangled cordage blent — confusion
vexed and puzzled.

Then land we on the shore
With white tents dotted o'er,
Amid the smothered roar of hosts in cease-
less motion ;

Weapons that gleam and glance,
War-steeds that neigh and prance,
The pomp and circumstance — a never-
resting ocean ;

Midst banners blown on high,
And pride in many an eye,
The dream of victory and fame in song
and story ;
The sense of power that flows
From banded strength, and glows,
Unseen but felt, and shows at length in
deeds of glory.

This fled. Before me passed
War and the battle's blast ;
I saw, like dead leaves cast, dead men
around me lying ;

I heard the deadly peal
Of sulphurous guns, saw reel
Dim columns piked with steel, and hosts
dismayed and flying.

I felt the bitter ire
Burn like infernal fire,
The impulse, the desire to slay, within me
glowing;
I felt the maddened leap,
The strong resistless sweep,
O'er furrowed fields sown deep with seed
of war's red sowing.

And then I heard the cry
Ring out, of victory —
Wild peal on peal on high, yet solemn, of
rejoicing;

Sad, mournful as a dirge,
I heard the sound emerge
From scenes of earth, and surge to heaven,
 strange judgments voicing.

Years seemed to pass : the bruit
Of struggle now was mute,
Bright tracts of grain and fruit o'erran the
 sunny region ;
Men planted, plucked, and sat
By vineyard-side and vat,
In fields by blood made fat, and dust of
 moldered legion.

The cause was won, and fame
Now crowned the patriot's name,
The soldier's wreath became the crown of
 love and honor ;

Who saw through years ahead
A mighty nation spread
To power august and dread through
 strength his deed had won her.

IV.

THE CORE OF FIRE.

The sun had gone, but I
Stayed on, as if some tie
Forbidding me to fly constrained to idle
vision ;

But a step on the footway stone,
And a quick neigh proudly blown,
Dispersed like mists wind-strown my
dreams with swift derision.

You should have seen him there,
My steed without compare !
That grace of mien, that air, no art could
catch and render —

My famous golden roan !
As dear as flesh and bone
Of my own body grown, through service
long and tender, —

Deep roan, from hoof to spine
Shot o'er with glimmering shine
Of golden fire divine, that web-like glanced
and shifted ;
A golden wonder ! Proud,
With royal traits endowed,
Fleet as a flying cloud, with strength
divinely gifted !

But eyes no more shall see
That form so brave and free,
His bones lie in the sea, and whiten 'neath
the surges,

Slain in that last wild chase,
That memorable race,
Found in its niche and place where his-
tory's light emerges.

“Ay, thou art there!” I cried,
“My lovely one! my pride!
With thy proud mien to chide for weak
intent thy master.

Thou dost not know what fate
Locks me within the gate,
How soul sinks desolate beneath some
keen disaster.

“Yet I must ride to-night
A mighty race! ere light
The sea must be in sight, or woe indeed
betide me!

But whither? to love's arms,
Outstretched through all alarms,
Or where war's fiery charms and duty's
finger guide me? "

Then came that deadly strife,
With fear and anguish rife,
Which comes but once in life, to purge
the soul or sear it;
That hour which leaves its trace
Long years on heart and face,
Destroys the form's fair grace, and pales
the vital spirit.

'Twas like a bath of fire
Infernal, dismal, dire, —
Wherein all hope, desire, all passion, doubt,
denial,

With youth's immortal dream,
Faith, virtue, truth supreme —
All that we are and seem, lay plunged in
fiery trial.

O torment past belief!
So terrible, though brief!
Of mortal ills the chief, of pangs the crown
and flower ;
Oh, 'twas with feet blood-shod
That interval I trod,
That moment great with God, sublime with
gloom and power.

There Love plead like a queen
With Duty stern of mien,
With lingering Time between, impatient
for decision ;

And gathered fast by these
All life's fierce energies,
Wild for the soul's decrees, or passion's
reign elysian.

Fair days and length of life,
With peace, and home, and wife,
On one hand beckoned; strife and war-
pangs on the other.—
“O dread necessity!
Swift, sure the choice must be!”
I cried in agony, “O wisdom, mighty
mother!

“Say, whither shall I go? —
Oh for an hour to know
What guidance thought can show, what
counsel reason utter!

No light! — Then let the voice
Most deep within have choice,
So shall no fate rejoice, though many mow
and mutter!”

From the soul's depths of flame
Instant the answer came,
With power that naught could maim, and
purpose naught could humble.
'Twas sealed — one sob replied
From a proud hope denied,
And the way lay clear and wide for feet
no more to stumble.

“Thanks! End love's mission so!
War hath me! — mount and go!”
I cried 'twixt joy and woe, with an impulse
all-defying,

An energy that bent
All powers to its intent, —
That goal with distance blent beside the
far sea lying.

V.

THE NIGHT RIDE.

'Twas dark, when like a cloud
On fire, with thunder loud
Of tramping hoofs that plowed the valley
 sod beneath us,
We launched into the night,
Whose arms to left and right
Spread to receive our flight, then closed,
 in gloom to sheathe us.

The night had fallen fair,
No cloud was in the air,
But o'er my cheek and hair a breeze swept
 unabated;

I scarcely thought or knew,
So rapidly we flew,
That 'twas no wind that blew save what
our speed created.

Soon through the eastern blue
The moon sailed into view
With face that frightened grew to see such
fearless riding ;
And at the sign of cheer
I felt my spirit clear,
And the waves of doubt and fear beneath
her feet subsiding.

So steadily, yet fleet !
The miles from under feet
Reeled backward in retreat, and massed
themselves in distance ;

The pine-plumes black in air
Streamed past like witches' hair,
The dark boles, lean and bare, seemed
 writhed in fierce resistance.

Trees, dwellings, lights spun past,
As if a frolic blast
Had caught them up and cast them head-
 long in confusion ;
I saw the fence-links start,
With awkward arms apart,
Right forth, then backward dart, as in
 some strange illusion.

The steepled towns swam by,
All still beneath the sky ;
I saw their spires gleam high, their win-
 dows wink and flicker ;

I saw them charmed and bound
By spectral shadows round,
All overflowed and drowned in night's
ethereal liquor.

As one in dreams of night,
In fancied plumes bedight,
In ecstasy of flight swims the ethereal
river,
So I flew on my way,
With spirit waxing gay
As some glad bird in May thrilled with
ecstatic quiver,

Till I scarcely heard the beat
Of my stallion's nimble feet,
Or felt the touch of seat, or bridle-rein, or
stirrup ;

Saw not how onward bore,
Swift — swifter evermore,
My roan — blood to the core! without a
cheer or chirrup.

Made drunk with joy I quaffed,
Pricked by the airy shaft
Of mirth, I sang and laughed till loud the
shades resounded;
And then I laughed again
To hear o'er hill and plain
Some dull owl hoot amain, sore startled
and confounded.

So on our course we swept,
Startling the things that slept,
Or nightly waking kept in wood or road-
side meadow,

With a high heart of glee
And buoyant energy
Of spirit, fresh and free, miles, miles
through light and shadow.

But joy and mirth, alas!
Tread on a floor of glass
Spun o'er a gulf where mass the rocks of
toil and sorrow;
So with a start of pain
I felt return again
The thought, the care, the strain — the
burden of the morrow, —

The urgent care, the dread,
The thought that yearned ahead
Hot for the end, — all bred of that stern
question pressing —

Would there be time ? could feet
Of horse, though ne'er so fleet,
Make hour and distance meet ? — all wild
and hopeless guessing.

The purpose strong at heart
Still held itself apart
Invincible, no art of soft appeal pre-
vailing
To move it from its throne,
Where, desolate, alone,
Committed to its own, it sat in strength
unfailing.

Whilst naught could this disarm,
The brain had caught alarm
From dread, foreboding harm, and doubt
allied with reason.

Lest failure and despair
Should wait to greet us there
With their dread "Too late!" weak heir
of an impotent season.

Too late! Distracting thought,
With conscious evil fraught,
That stung the soul o'erwrought to desperate endeavor:
"No! no! not so, my roan!
Our life's one hope is thrown
On thee! oh speed, my own, lest we be
shamed forever!"

It seemed a heartless deed
To urge my faithful steed
To greater pace, whose speed already
mocked at distance;

And 'twere indeed my shame
But for the voice that came,
Stern, evermore the same, "On! on!" with
fierce insistence.

VI.

PAUSE AND VISTA.

At midnight, with our race
Half done, we checked our pace
In a secluded place, by hills and lowlands
 bounded ;
Beside a bosky pool
Outstretching dim and cool,
By many a whispering school of reeds and
 grass surrounded.

And here we stayed ; and here
Unburdened of his gear,
My steed found pleasant cheer 'mid spring-
 ing grass abundant ;

But ere the pool he drank
I cooled hot breast and flank
With copious baths, till sank in calm their
pulse redundant.

And while he gladly fed,
I paced with aimless tread
By a rivulet that fed the pool with tiny
clamor;
Its voice, its twinkling smile,
So bright and fresh, a while
Wrought softly to beguile my soul with
peaceful glamour.

I looked about to see
Like what the place might be
Whose hospitality constrained our brief
abiding,

Yielding with pleasing art
Fresh balm to soothe our smart,
Refreshing brain and heart for still more
dauntless riding.

It seemed a spot designed —
Made just for this. Behind
Rose ruggedly defined the mountain's
wild dominion,
Savage and stern. Before,
Stretched out like ocean's floor,
Warm lands lay, brooded o'er by hope's
unruffled pinion.

A realm of calm between
A rough and boisterous scene,
And fruitful plains serene for freedom's
heart made spacious,

It seemed — a blest retreat
For mountain-weary feet
To rest in ere they fleet to scenes more
mild and gracious.

Was it an omen blest
To cheer me on my quest?
I knew not, but I guessed some such a
thought did cheer it.
Methought from out the calm
A voice of heavenly balm
Breathed a victorious psalm across my
wounded spirit.

And then I turned my eyes
Forth on the midnight skies —
Deep — deep ! immensities of blue un-
fathomed spaces,

Planted with tribes of light,
Wild, wonderful and bright,
Far past thought's farthest flight, or fancy's
airy chases !

“ Peace, power, sublimity !
How glorious are ye
To this dim sense which we in this dim
world call seeing !
Hath not man's soul some sense
Whereby to draw from thence
Of your beneficence, to calm his fretful
being ?

“ Outcasts of fate, alone,
Feeble, forlorn, unknown,
We strive, and fret, and groan, scourged
on by unseen master ;

To your calm eyes how vain
Must seem this toil and strain,
This strife of loss and gain, submerged in
dim disaster —

“ Worms in a pit of clay,
Writhed in abhorrent fray
Shot with a dull red ray of wandering fire
uncertain ;
Seen in their rage and slime
A moment's space, till time
Rolls on his course sublime, and veils
them with a curtain.

“ False voice, be still ! Shall I
That noble fire deny,
That kindly light belie, which warms our
common spirit ?

No! no! Yet would I glean
From this untroubled scene
Something of peace serene to elevate and
cheer it."

And from that depth divine
There did indeed forth shine
On that awed heart of mine a gleam of
warmth caressing;
I thought how blest it were
Had I some brother there,
Some friend beloved, to share so deep and
rich a blessing.

And thus 'twixt stream and sky
A fruitful hour went by,
Till I severed with a sigh the moonbeam
chain that bound me;

And turned in half despair
To take again and wear
The crown of toil and care wherewith the
 night had crowned me —

Broke up the glowing trance
To seize again the lance,
And try the battle's chance, what destiny
 awaited;
But with serener soul,
A mind in calm control,
Yet a heart set on the goal with purpose
 unabated.

'Twas but a thought to grace
My stallion for the race,
Throw riding-gear in place, seize rein,
 with toe in stirrup,

And but one more to fling
Myself in seat, and spring
Forward like bird on wing, with cheerful
word and chirrup.

VII.

THE PRICE.

Behind in blue profound
The moon hung full and round,
Our shadows on the ground sped, as we
 sped, before us ;

A breeze that sweetly blew
From meadows rich with dew,
And ever fresher grew, in grateful streams
 went o'er us.

From thence unerringly
The road made for the sea, —
A highway broad and free for night-bound
 wight to travel ;

Unlike the one we left
Behind us, cloven and cleft,
And twined in mazy weft for patience to
unravel.

Patient as thought or fate,
That haste not nor abate
Their course, we kept that gait invincible,
unaltered;
Steady as pulse of time,
Hour after hour, the chime
Of hoofs rang on in rhyme that never
changed or faltered.

Hours, leagues — then suddenly,
From a hill's long shelter free,
The long roar of the sea across my ear
came pealing;

And then I was aware
Some change was in the air,
And lo ! in the far east there the bud of
dawn unsealing !

And then, as on we sped,
I rose and strained ahead
On that sudden scene outspread, my heart
wild tumult keeping ;
Yes, there at last it lay,
Town, light-house, fleet and bay,
Two level leagues away, in quiet moon-
light sleeping.

But two leagues off ! So nigh !
My hope swelled proud and high,
Yet I turned a careful eye to watch my
stallion's paces,

And noted how his feet
Had lost their rhythmic beat,
His gait the steady heat that had won us
those wide spaces.

I leaned and in his ear
Spoke words of praise and cheer,
Called him the names most dear, with
pride and courage blended ;
Stroked quivering neck and hip,
Besprayed with many a slip
Of foam blown fierce from lip in fiery pain
distended.

“ One more brave pull, my roan !
And the fight is all our own !
Bear up, my bird ! and none from fame
this deed shall sever ;

For this thou shalt be found
Through all the world renowned,
Without a rival crowned hero and prince
forever !”

My words seemed to impart
Fresh vigor to his heart,
Re-arm the matchless art he held in proud
possession ;
And again the faithful feet
Caught up their rhythmic beat,
And bore it on complete with resolute
expression.

My thought now was, should we
Ere daylight gain the sea,
Even though our pace should be thus to
the end unfailing,

For lo there ! in the east
Broad hints of morn's rich feast
Grew upward and increased, the stars'
warm luster paling.

Soon, with the race nigh won,
While eager fancy spun
Triumphs that space outrun, my heart
like joy-bells pealing,
From my roan's proud breast a sigh
Broke forth — a sobbing cry,
And I felt in agony his frame beneath me
reeling.

Felt him a moment reel
Unnerved, then spring like steel,
With straining neck and heel, in that last
grand endeavor !

“ Proud heart ! thou sufferest so ! ”

I cried, with tears of woe.

“ But one more strain, and lo ! the race is
ours forever ! ”

* * * * *

Dawn shone o'er town and fleet,
When through the seaport street
A horse with staggering feet went reeling
with its master ;
All hollow, ghastly, lank,
With heaving chest and flank,
And head that swayed and sank — a ghost
of grim disaster, —

Reeled on, blind, broken, blown,
Till on the pier-head stone
He paused, — then with a groan rolled
over, spent and dying ;

Lay prone ; and like one slain,
Conquered in nerve and brain
By that long toil and strain, his master by
him lying.

VIII.

TO THE BRIM!

I woke, alive with fears,
And trembling nigh to tears,
With the deep roar in my ears, tumultu-
ous, of the ocean;
While ever under me
The long heave of the sea
Went on, as restlessly he rolled in billowy
motion.

I looked above, around—
All one vast deep profound
Of sky and sea! no bound to circumscribe
the vision;

And we with wings unfurled,
Alone in that vast world,
Drove through and clove the curled clear
waves in proud derision.

This scene, unfolding, bred
Stern questions in my head,
Mixed with a fear, a dread of some unkind
disaster
Befallen the hope I wore
Deep in my bosom's core,
That a changeling fate I bore, betrayed to
luckless master.

Which missive of the twain
Sped yester from the main
Had triumphed? whose the gain, and
whose the pain of losing?

In that dim trance of mind,
In that chance game, and blind,
What fate had been assigned without my
will or choosing?

But whilst my weary brain
Wrought in compulsive pain,
Plagued by surmises vain and questions
vague and vexing,
Something that breathed of good
Perfumed the neighborhood,
Though dimly understood, and mixed with
thoughts perplexing.

Then conscious I became
Some voice pronounced my name, —
Oh warm with love's pure flame the sylla-
bles came o'er me!

And I saw two eyes divine
Look softly into mine,
O'erbrimmed with lustrous shine, like
love-springs oped before me.

Soft hands caressed my hair
With touch divinely rare,
And in the silence there I felt warm arms
close round me ;
And like a bird in my ear
A voice piped "Cheer! cheer! cheer!
My love! my mate! my dear! oh now
indeed I've found thee!"

I put the touch aside,
The loving clasp untied,
The tender lips denied that yearned with
greeting kisses ;

Calm, sorrowful as fate,
Put by the draught elate
Of heart's warm love create, with all its
promised blisses.

“Alas ! not now !” I said ;
“Too late thy missive sped,
Another cause has wed, another service
bound me ;
Behold my heart the same,
Of love a living flame,
But duty stern of name and purpose now
has crowned me.

“The heart sings loud of bliss,
But the soul says more than this ;
Sacred the spirit's kiss, inviolate for-
ever ;

Oh love, believe me true ;
Warm — warm, forever new,
My heart holds firm that clew no time or
change can sever !

“ Warm, faithful ! — yet must I
Put love’s sweet promise by,
Although with bitter cry the heart bewail
her treasure ;
In war-stained skies above
The eagle outsoars the dove,
Till peace conspires with love to crown
her empty measure.

“ Thy brave bright heart I know,
What joys it would forego
For this dear land’s sake, so beset around
by evil ;

By treacherous fate betrayed,
Blind from the pathway strayed,
I claim thy loyal aid to work a swift
retrieval.

“ But tell me now, I pray,
What means this grim array
Of weapons formed to slay heaped round,
— pike, sword and rifle?
What mean these warlike notes,
Rung from heroic throats?
No love-lay, this, that dotes on some melo-
dious trifle !

“ Ah, dost thou laugh at me?
Why this strange mockery?
Oh, now I wake and see, who have been
blind and dreaming ;

Witch! I perceive the sign!
Fairy! some charm of thine
Has wrought this work divine, disguised
in artful seeming!

“‘Love that can love forego
Is first love crowned, I trow,’
Runs not the old song so? — Kiss — twine
thy arms around me!
I chose for war; — with speed
Love flies to crown the deed,
And here behold my meed; — both war
and love have found me!

“Yes, now indeed I see
How all sweet things agree
To bless abundantly him who in right
reposes;

How all kind fates conspire
To yield his heart's desire, —
Bathe sword in fairy fire and wreathe the
shield with roses!

“ Oh dull! not to have guessed
Those missives' one behest, —
Doves from the self-same nest on the self-
same errand fleeting;
Ay, blind! not to have seen
What art lay couched between
That call from love's fair queen, and her
brother's warlike greeting.

“ Thanks, love, for thy bright deed,
That showed my country's need,
Put drooping hope to speed, and faith to
fiery trial;

And thanks to that high voice,
In that dark hour of choice,
That won me to rejoice in passion's stern
denial!

“Mysterious as of yore,
Oh lovely evermore!
The spirit's sacred lore, that blooms in
deathless beauty;
See! here once more 'tis shown,
All things do toil and groan
To build for him a throne who keeps firm
faith with duty!”



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